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BYLINE: Edward Gunts, Sun architecture critic

BODY:

St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church was designed by the noted architect Joseph Evans Sperry. Its sanctuary is the work of the Tiffany Studios, best known for its stained-glass windows. The church is considered a textbook example of the Italian and Richardsonian Romanesque styles. Yet no public body ever determined that the 1898 building should be given landmark status - until now.

Baltimore's Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation voted this month to add the stone church at 1920 St. Paul St. to the city's landmark list. The designation still must be ratified by Baltimore's Planning Commission and City Council and Mayor Sheila Dixon before it's official, but CHAP's action already has raised the spirits of those who have worked to see the church declared a landmark.

"Internally and externally, the building is spectacular. It's amazing it has gone this long and not been designated," said Margaret Shamer, a church member who was instrumental in getting CHAP to consider the designation. "I hope it will attract some attention."

Adding a building to the city's landmark list means that owners can't change the exterior without approval from the preservation commission, and that will help protect it, said the Rev. Dale Dusman, the church pastor.

"We want to be good stewards for the present, but we also want to look to the future," he said.

St. Mark's is the latest in a record number of buildings and districts that were recommended for addition to Baltimore's landmark list this year.

The designations were part of an effort by the commission to be more aggressive about "landmarking" significant buildings and places before they're threatened with demolition or defacement. Panel members stepped up designation efforts after the city lost several key buildings during the past few years because they were not protected by landmark designation, including the Rochambeau apartments on Cathedral Hill and a row of early 1800s houses near Mercy Medical Center.

In some cases, adding buildings to the landmark list also means that owners will be eligible for tax credits for

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historic preservation.

In all, the preservation commission recommended adding more than two dozen buildings and places to the landmark list, which had about 160 properties at the start of the year. It also recommended adding three districts and expanding one more, to join the previous roster of 29 local historic districts.

"It's the largest number of landmark designations that we've ever had" in one year, said preservation planner Brigitte Fessenden.

Most of the buildings were added with the owners' consent, although several were not. Many have gone through all the steps in the designation process and are now official landmarks, while others are still working through the steps. Several of the designations stand out because the buildings are fewer than 50 years old - the age at which buildings typically begin to be considered for landmark designation.

Castalia question

Residents of the Tuscany Canterbury community will meet at 7:30 p.m. Thursday to vote on whether to allow Calvert School to tear down Castalia, a Laurence Hall Fowler-designed residence at 200 Tuscany Road; to raze a former fraternity house at 3906 Canterbury Road to make way for an expansion, and to increase enrollment by 23 students. The meeting will be at the Scottish Rite Temple, 39th and Charles streets.

ed.gunts@baltsun.com

Where things stand

Buildings officially added to the city's landmark list include: the W.E.B. DuBois house, the Senator Theatre, Ruscombe Mansion, United Baptist Church, Baltimore City College, St. Matthews Church, Johnny Eck House, Christ Lutheran Church, Dr. John T. Camper House, and the Giering House.

Buildings that the Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation has recommended for listing but are still waiting for approval from other city boards include: the Upton Mansion, Roland Park water tower, St. Stanislaus Church, Four Bay House (on the same block as St. Stanislaus Church), Hendler Creamery, Morris Mechanic Theatre, the Bolton Square townhouse community, American Brewery, Riverside Park, St. Paul Community Baptist Church, Raffel Building, Scottish Rite Temple of Freemasonry, Harford Commons, Mount Calvary Church, Melvin Cade Armory, Terminal Warehouse and Nazarene Baptist Church.

Districts that were added or expanded include the Fells Point and the Wyndhurst historic districts and expansion of the Historic Mount Royal district. A Park Circle historic district was designated by CHAP but still needs approval from others.

Buildings or districts that were added to the National Register of Historic Places with CHAP's consent include: Highfield House on North Charles Street, the Riverside National Register district in South Baltimore and the L. Greif & Bros. building in South Baltimore.

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